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News Release

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Army Corps of Engineers and New York to celebrate first phase of wetlands restoration in the Upper Susquehanna

Baltimore - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, announced today the start of the first phase of the effort to restore hundreds of acres of wetlands in the Otsego Lake watershed and along the downstream Susquehanna River mainstem to approximately Colliersville, N.Y.

To mark this event, a ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held August 13, at 10 a.m., at a site located two miles south of the center of Cooperstown, on state Route 28. Heading south on Route 28, turn left just past a tan utility building. Signs will be posted.

U.S. Rep. Sherwood L. Boehlert of New York, Col. Charles J. Fiala, Jr., commander of the Corps' Baltimore District, Dr. Robert Hoffman, director of Conservation Programs for Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and Erin Crotty, Commissioner of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation are among the scheduled guest speakers.

In this first phase, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will construct and monitor approximately 120 acres of wetland and associated habitat. The data collected from these areas will assist the study team in developing an overall restoration plan, quantify environmental benefits and provide information that will refine the design of future wetlands. These wetlands are part of the larger Upper Susquehanna River Basin-Cooperstown Area Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study that began in February 2002. The goal of the study is to identify areas within the Susquehanna River basin upstream of the Chemung River that would be suitable for wetland restoration. The Corps and state are sharing the \$1.6 million costs of the feasibility study, which will continue through 2004.

"We are initially looking at about 500 acres total of restored wetland and related grassland habitat, but there could be more," said Amy Guise, Corps of Engineers' project manager. "During the study we will identify those areas within the watershed that are most suitable for restoration."

Ducks Unlimited, Inc., the State University of New York (SUNY)-Oneonta Biological Field Station, the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, the Otsego County Water Quality Coordinating Committee, the Otsego Lake Watershed Council, the Otsego County Conservation Association, the Clark Foundation, Inc., and many citizens strongly support the project.

Wetlands provide a number of valuable functions to include capturing harmful sediments, reducing nutrient pollution, enhancing water quality, reducing nuisance flood damages, enhancing recreational and educational opportunities, and providing important nesting habitats for a variety of aquatic and wildlife resources native to the headwaters of the Susquehanna River.